

## FAQ on Meeting the Needs of English Learners in an Online Environment

How can educators provide high-quality instruction to English learners in an online environment?

Regional Educational  
Laboratory  
Northeast & Islands

From the National Center for Education Evaluation at IES

### How can educators provide high-quality instruction to English learners (ELs) in an online environment?

Online environments can exacerbate existing inequalities for ELs, and educators should consider how to address these issues as they design instruction. The issues include, but are not limited to:

- Many families of ELs have [minimal access](#) to technology and the internet.
- While many districts and educational organizations are offering resources translated [into multiple languages](#), families from low-incidence language backgrounds can be left out.
- [English learners who are older](#) and close to high school graduation, especially those who have had previously interrupted schooling, may find themselves obligated to stop studying altogether and look for work.

Here are some things the community can do:

1. Use [existing resources](#) to build skills and expertise in evidence-based strategies for ELs that, while not designed for online learning, can be adapted.
2. Access [free online professional development](#) to build key skills and strategies for working with ELs.
3. Access resources already collected by states ([Connecticut](#), [Florida](#), [New York](#), [Tennessee](#)) and English learner organizations ([Colorín Colorado](#), [Hudson Valley RBERN](#), [MATSOL](#), [TESOL](#), [WIDA](#)) for teachers and parents to use with English learners.
4. [Plan online learning](#) to take advantage of different formats: real-time virtual classes have the benefit of focusing on oral language and allowing interaction, but the pace of conversation can be too fast. Asynchronous classes allow English learners more time to process, translate, and practice, with a focus on literacy skills, but lack critical opportunities for interaction.
5. Stay up to date with rapidly changing [information](#) and [policies](#) in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

#### Related links

- Understanding the issues
  - <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED581891.pdf>
  - [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2020/03/coronavirus\\_english\\_learners\\_digital\\_divide.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2020/03/coronavirus_english_learners_digital_divide.html)
  - <https://www.colorincolorado.org/coronavirus>
- Existing resources on EL instruction: <https://ell.stanford.edu/>

- Free professional development (scroll down to Professional Learning and “Pathways to Success for English Learners”): <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/English-Learners/English-Learners>
- Connecticut (go to p.18 for EL-focused resources): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2019-20/Connecticut-Covid19-Resources-to-Support-Student-Learning-002-final.pdf?la=en>
- Deerfield Beach, Broward County, Florida: <https://deerfieldbeachhigh.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Free-Online-Resources-Language-Acquisition-2018.pdf>
- New York: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NJDr72mBMTMEkUGeIJ3bnOwcLgqaa6zLfnWBBuGlnrc/edit#gid=0>
- Tennessee: <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/health-&-safety/SuggestionsforESLClassesandActivitiesCOVID-19Guidance.pdf>
- <https://www.colorincolorado.org/coronavirus-ell>
- Hudson Valley (NY) Regional Bilingual Education Resources Network at Southern Westchester BOCES: <https://www.hudsonvalleyrbern.org/>
- Distance Learning Resources for MLLs: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QHITcbG83wpQFZVrdraWJSNI0Izz7pId1h3enXw0ICc/htmlview?fbclid=IwAR2XVgn8Tf4Olqor9PY1BegyU0vznzJV8d4-xqJcFNFzaHeDhRtmVUnZEfBo#>
- MATSOL
  - <https://matsol.blog/2020/03/17/free-multilingual-online-libraries/>
  - <https://matsol.blog/2020/03/07/multilingual-covid-19-information/>
- TESOL: <https://www.tesol.org/coronavirus-resources-for-teachers>
- WIDA
  - <https://wida.wisc.edu/memberships/isc/newsletter/teaching-multilingual-learners-online>
- SupportEd
  - <https://padlet.com/diane30/m7j8wz0v3qgb>
- Staying up to date
  - <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/coronavirus-and-schools/index.html>
  - <https://ccsso.org/coronavirus>

March 20, 2020

This document was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0008 by Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands, administered by Education Development Center. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.